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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000842

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGERIANS CAUTIOUSLY WELCOME AFRICOM BRIEFING

Classified By: Ambassador Robert S. Ford; reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Ryan Henry, accompanied by his delegation, consulted with newly installed Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci, Minister Delegate for National Defense Abdelmalek Guenaizia and senior representatives of the foreign and defense ministries and intelligence services in Algiers June 10 on the establishment of AFRICOM. After Henry gave an overview of the U.S. approach to establishing AFRICOM, Medelci thanked him for the "general spirit" of the AFRICOM endeavor. Noting Algeria's heavy losses from terrorism, Medelci expressed satisfaction at the U.S. consultative approach and appreciated American readiness to be a partner to African countries in moving forward. He added that African leaders had been pursuing security mechanisms for the continent for several months. He observed that the proposed U.S. endeavor included the whole continent and concerned Algeria as a country and as a member state of the African Union. He then opened the floor to Algerian interagency representatives to ask questions of Henry or make comments.

¶2. (C) MFA Minister Delegate for Africa Messahel said he appreciated the military and civilian mix the U.S. was proposing in the context of partnership with Africa's efforts to take charge of its own security. Messahel was very interested in what role the French (the former colonial power in Algeria) would play in the U.S. establishment of AFRICOM, as was Algerian intelligence official General Lallali, who encouraged the U.S. to define what partnership role in AFRICOM former African colonial powers, especially Spain and France, would play. Lallali also wanted to be sure that AFRICOM would support the AU position that existing borders are inviolate. The Algerian delegation also took careful note (and a few visibly relaxed) when Henry underlined that establishing AFRICOM would not mean deployment of American forces permanently onto the continent.

¶3. (C) Medelci said Algeria was sensitive to the U.S. desire to consult African countries but regretted that the consultation did not occur prior to President Bush's announcement to establish the new command. He concluded by characterizing the discussions as "very important in building consensus and an approach in common." He expressed government of Algeria appreciation for the U.S. desire for partnership. While acknowledging that Algeria would have additional questions to propose in the future, the FM stated that the discussions with Henry's delegation marked a positive start.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) The GoA leaked to several reporters two days after this briefing that the GoA had been explicit in not welcoming the American decision to establish AFRICOM. The press articles highlighted that the Algerian delegation cautioned the Americans that there were African instruments and processes to address security problems on the African continent. The press articles did not, however, state that Algeria rejected the establishment of AFRICOM.

¶5. (C) This was our first time to see Mourad Medelci in his new role as Foreign Minister. He seemed somewhat ill at ease and stayed close to a script written out longhand in front of him. By contrast, Minister Delegate Messahel was relaxed and asked more penetrating questions. The Algerians received the Henry delegation with relatively heavy hitters from the Algerian bureaucracy, but they all seemed quite stiff and formal - probably in part because they were ill at ease in front of each other.

¶6. (U) Deputy Under Secretary Henry and his delegation did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

FORD